



State of Connecticut

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Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky in Support of a Stable DEP Budget and Retaining Clean Energy Investment

Before the Appropriations Committee
February 17, 2009 public hearing

The CT Department of Environmental Protection is important to the state's quality of life, protecting land, air and water and the animal and plant life that make the state a special place. The DEP provides low cost, affordable family recreation for our constituents with its park and forest system. Yet this department has suffered steady erosion, increasing its budget only 1.3 % over the last 20 years!

The remnant agency is too small to send personnel out to inspect wetland or flood prone sites that need the technical assistance of experienced staff, too overextended to handle new issues of concern to the municipalities such as wood smoke, and too overworked to analyze incoming data and complete review of permits and regulations in a timely manner. When we see the number of unfilled positions, it is clear why this is so. The proposed budget will at least place the small number of DEP personnel in the general fund budget, a more stable situation than currently exists.

Gov. Rell and Commissioner McCarthy have produced an intriguing proposal for a conservation jobs corps that would employ workers while improving the parks and forests for public use. I would like to support this clever idea, but not at the cost of gutting the Clean Energy and CT Innovations accounts. Last week, consultants from Clean Cities addressed my municipality and expressed concern that CT will lose federal stimulus funds for green technology because: (1) we don't have an energy office or energy commissioner; (2) our neighbor states do; and (3) we are poised to eliminate clean energy funding, indicating that green

technology is not a priority. This is a huge mistake. The federal stimulus package includes about \$500 million in green technology funds for the states. These funds could be the beginnings of a new economic development cluster in Connecticut, a state with high energy prices. We must not forfeit this federal money to our neighbor states of NY, MA and RI which are poised to accept it and already have the energy policy and coordination to win the funds.